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Kleptocracy and the rotten ruling system

The ugly face of bureaucrat capitalism under the reactionary Estrada regime

Because the Philippine economy is backward and semifeudal, the protection and expansion of the economic interests of the ruling classes is decisively tied to their political control or influence over the government and bureaucracy. Bureaucrat capitalism is concomitant to imperialist and feudal exploitation and oppression of the people.

Kleptocracy, or a system of government run by thieves, prevails under a bureaucrat capitalist regime. The bureaucracy is awash with corruption, influence-peddling, contract-fixing and other rotten practices especially by its highest officials.

On this question, no fundamental difference exists among the Marcos, Aquino, Ramos and Estrada regimes. If anything, cases of plunder have progressively worsened. The use of power to gain

benefits and privileges for business and amass wealth has become more brazen. On the one hand, this is triggered by the continuous deterioration of the economy. Intensified bureaucrat capitalist operations, on the other hand, aggravate the economic crisis.

Government statistics estimate that as much as \$48 billion (more than P2 trillion!) have been stolen by bureaucrats from state coffers in the last 20 years.

The Marcos Regime

In more than a decade of open fascist dictatorial rule under the US-Marcos clique, state power and influence were monopolized and brazenly utilized by the Marcoses and their cohorts to pillage funds and enrich themselves.

The Philippine foreign debt grew several times over even as the people were caught in a quagmire of poverty and non-development. The Marcos family and its closest cronies, on the other hand, wallowed in billions of dollars of plundered wealth.

Guaranteed by the government, these foreign debts are now being shouldered by the Filipino people. The Jose de Venecia-owned Landoil Inc. and its subsidiaries, for instance, benefited from a P3.134-billion loan from the government. According to the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), more than P1.1 trillion were looted from the government under the Marcos dictatorship.

The dictatorship seized the properties of rival big capitalists to foster the monopoly rule of its business partners. Numerous burdensome taxes were imposed on the people to replenish funds pillaged from the nation's coffers. Like the coco levy fund (consisting of a 10% forced deduction from the income of small coconut farmers over a 10-year period), these taxes were pocketed by the dictator's minions.

... under Aquino

When Corazon Aquino took power in February 1986, she immediately formed the PCGG to

investigate, prosecute and recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses and their accomplices. The stolen Marcos wealth was put under PCGG control pending the investigation and preparation of cases for prosecution. The PCGG sequestered a number of big corporations, stocks and bank deposits owned by pro-Marcos reactionaries.

All things considered, Aquino could have utilized her absolute powers derived from the “Freedom Constitution” to confiscate and declare as public property all of the Marcoses’ ill-gotten wealth. The formation of the PCGG thus represented an immediate compromise with the Marcos family. It assured the Marcoses that disposition of their stolen wealth would pass through reactionary judicial bodies packed with Marcos appointees.

Thus, up to the end of the Aquino administration, not a single centavo from the billions of pesos worth of the Marcoses’ loot had reverted to the Filipino people. The Aquino regime did not smash the economic and political power of the Marcos family and its cronies. Instead, the PCGG entered into anomalous agreements which allowed the Marcoses and their lackeys to recover economic and political privileges in exchange for a token retrieval of a small portion of their stolen wealth.

Such reluctance on the part of the Aquino regime is inexorably linked to the fact that pro-Aquino bureaucrat capitalists were themselves benefiting immensely from the status quo. They utilized their power to monopolize favors and privileges in procuring contracts, loans and other advantages bestowed by government to private business. Aquino’s relatives and friends jockeyed for control of the sequestered Marcos corporations, stocks and real estate. International aid and new loans from Japan and the US were funneled to a select group of businesses owned by the so-called Kamag-anak, Inc.

Under the Aquino regime emerged a new division of the ruling system’s dwindling spoils among reactionary factions. The door was flung open to allow benefits to flow towards those who had been disfranchised by the Marcos regime. Pledges to wipe out anomalies in government were abandoned. Aquino simply served as a figurehead in the transition from the rotten bureaucrat capitalist Marcos regime towards an even more rotten bureaucrat capitalist and fascist regime without Marcos.

... and under Ramos

Gen. Fidel Ramos provided a continuum between the fascist Marcos dictatorship and subsequent regimes.

Ramos feigned opposition to the Marcos legacy. As president of the reactionary government, he allowed the repatriation of the Marcos family and the remains of the deposed dictator. Under his regime, efforts to recover the Marcoses’ stolen loot suffered further reversals.

Settlements were arranged to restore control of plundered businesses and real estate to the Marcoses and their minions. In April 1998, Eduardo Cojuangco was allowed to regain control of 20% of San Miguel Corporation stocks which he seized during the Marcos dictatorship using the coco levy fund. Recovery of their stolen wealth laid the ground for their ultimate political rehabilitation. Imelda and Bongbong Marcos became members of congress aside from other pro-Marcos politicians like Edgardo Angara, Joseph Estrada, Francisco Tatad, Rodolfo Albano, Blas Ople and many others.

Contrary to the “clean” image Ramos likes to project, the biggest cases of corruption occurred during his regime. Bureaucrat capitalists, big compradors and foreign capitalists took advantage of the privatization program to lay their hands on prime real estate, strategic corporations and public institutions such as Fort Bonifacio, the Philippine National Oil Company, Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System, Philippine Airlines and Manila Hotel.

Public biddings were rigged to make sure that contracts of sale were cornered by a select group of Ramos cronies. Ramos himself meddled in such contracts: In the case of the scandalous PEA-Amari land deal, an estimated P3 billion worth of kickbacks were pocketed by Ramos, de Venecia and other high officials of the government and the ruling Lakas-NUCD Party.

Like Marcos’ and Aquino’s minions, Ramos’ stooges had a big edge in securing loans and business privileges. It is estimated that up to P100 billion in loans were granted by government institutions to big business friends of Ramos. The latter belong to the so-called “Team Philippines”, a group that was consistently part of

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Ramos' entourage in his travels abroad to search for foreign capitalist partners.

Crisis and the Rotten Estrada Government

The ruling system is in the depths of crisis. It is impossible to prevent the putrid stench of bureaucrat capitalist operations from coming out. Dwindling spoils have pushed bureaucrat capitalists to furiously race against each other, edging out rivals in cornering the biggest share of wealth, property and privilege.

The return of the Marcoses attests to the absence of any fundamental change in the reactionary system. The method by which they returned—brazen and scandalous as it was—proves that the entire system is rotten to its very core. Corruption and bureaucratic plunder of state coffers continue unabated, with officials relishing the perks of power more than ever.

Reactionaries worried about being disfranchised from the bureaucracy are pitching their voices in condemning the “return of cronyism”. Their interests are at risk in the face of Estrada's contemptuous use of power.

These developments occur amid a most intense economic crisis. According to the International Monetary Fund, Philippine foreign debt has reached \$51 billion. The government is expected to incur a budget deficit of up to P40-70 billion this year. Ramos left behind only a handful of public property which could be sold to effect a reprieve from the crisis. In Asia, the much-vaunted “emergent markets” have sunk and the illusion of economic development has been dispelled. Despite all this, Estrada shall pursue the policy of denationalization, liberalization, privatization and deregulation—



policies which have driven the economy deeper into crisis and imposed greater hardships on the people.

Due to the intensity of the crisis, the despoliation of government funds can only attain more scandalous proportions. Reactionaries in power will be more brazen in their use of bureaucracy and influence to amass wealth.

There is fertile ground for the rise of anomalies more pernicious than the PEA-Amari scam. Cojuangco has already grabbed San Miguel Corporation. If not for the scandal it raised, Manuel Villar, new Speaker of the House and the biggest among Estrada's stooges, would have cornered a P1-billion loan from the Social Security System for his moribund Manuela Corporation.

There is less room for an amicable sharing of funds and state privileges among reactionaries. The crisis and the brazenness of the new ruling clique will push the anti-Estrada reactionaries to “challenge” the new president.

Estrada has been attempting to eliminate the “pork barrel” (funds allotted for congressional projects and a frequent source of corruption) which has been traditionally used by reactionaries to amicably share the spoils of public office. Taking advantage of popular sentiments against the “pork barrel” and widespread corruption in congress, Estrada's ultimate objective is not to do away with corruption, but to

centralize it in Malacañang. Estrada will be able to exercise control over these funds through his direct leadership over the Department of Interior and Local Government which handles infrastructure projects that serve as milking cows.

Down with bureaucrat capitalism!

When it comes to fundamental social questions, however, there is unity among opposing factions of the ruling class. Their contest for power does not diminish their oneness in exploiting and oppressing the people.

All of them are staunch puppets of US imperialism. Like all bureaucrat capitalists, Estrada passes on the entire burden of crisis to the people. “Tighten your belts”, he admonishes.

But the people have nothing to gain in exchange for the sacrifices they are made to shoulder. All of Estrada's promises and gimmickry are for nought since he has manifested early on his puppetry to imperialism and declared that he would perpetuate existing pro-foreign and anti-people policies. The people have nothing to expect from a government that represents US imperialism and the exploiting classes. Under Estrada, a more miserable life awaits the people. Bureaucrat capitalism is a burden and a destructive force that ruins the people's livelihood. In the eyes of the masses, the ruling system becomes even more despicable. As workers and peasants agonize in their hunger, bureaucrats in power obsess themselves with satisfying their gluttonous appetites. Such open plunder and thievery accelerates the decay of the ruling system. It is digging for itself an ever deeper grave. Thus, the people are more than ever convinced of the need to persevere in revolutionary struggle, to thoroughly eliminate corruption and change society. **AB**

Erap for Danding

Less than a week after Estrada assumed office, Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco swiftly and stealthily seized San Miguel Corporation with the help of pro-Marcos officials of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG). Two weeks later, Cojuangco's proteges were appointed by Estrada to the board of the National Power Corporation.

The new regime is brazenly determined to reinstate the cronies of the fascist dictator Marcos at the top of the bureaucracy and big business.

What else is left of the slogan "Erap for the poor" if his first priority is to return the billions of pesos of stolen wealth to the fascist Marcos clique? If his number one concern is the economic and political rehabilitation of the family and stooges of the dead dictator?

Danding Cojuangco: Pillar of Reaction

No one is bigger than Cojuangco among Marcos' stooges. He was part of the "Rolex 12" that planned the imposition of martial law in 1972. He is the foremost bourgeois comprador and bureaucrat capitalist who profited immensely from fascist rule. He grabbed vast tracts of land and interests in the coconut and sugar industry, food processing, timber, banking, communications and transportation and others.

Cojuangco is a despotic landlord from Tarlac. He maintains a notorious private army involved in many cases of murder and suppression of militant peasants in Central Luzon.

He fell along with Marcos in 1986. Since silently slipping back into the country, Cojuangco has become the center of reconsolidating pro-Marcos reactionaries. He immediately grouped his former accomplices and plotted their return to power. He was among those behind the attempted coup d'etat against Aquino in 1989.

Cojuangco is among the principal pillars of the reactionary ruling classes. His power pervades big business, national reactionary politics and even the AFP and PNP. He established the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD) and Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) which served as platforms for his attempts to regain state power. As number one financier, Cojuangco was the biggest winner during Estrada's 1998 election victory. At present, he heads the ruling Laban ng Masang Pilipino (LAMP) party.

Cojuangco's chosen stooges are at the core of Estrada's government. Ronaldo Zamora and Orlando Mercado are his principal henchmen and agents. They have been appointed to key positions—Zamora as Executive Secretary and Mercado as Defense Secretary. Roberto Lastimoso, appointed PNP Chief and Fernando "Gerry" Barican, designated as Estrada's spokesman, are both Cojuangco boys. Through them, Estrada himself and other appointed officials in the military and civil bureaucracy, Cojuangco has the current reactionary regime in the palm of his hand.

Danding, the "Godfather"

Cojuangco, in fact, is Estrada's "godfather". It can even be said that Cojuangco is the real president because it is he who holds real power.

It is no surprise that Cojuangco lost no time in reinstating himself in San Miguel Corporation (SMC) last July 6.

Right after assuming his post in Malacañang, Estrada appointed Felix de Guzman as chair of the PCGG in accordance with Cojuangco's directive. From 1971 to 1983, de Guzman served as taskman of Estelito Mendoza, Cojuangco's lead counsel who is himself a former Marcos crony. De Guzman was in Cojuangco's payroll when he was appointed to the Tarlac Regional Trial Court from 1983-86.

To preserve himself, Andres Soriano III resigned as head of SMC three days before Cojuangco was formally reinstated. Fifty one percent (51%) of SMC's stocks and votes in the Board of Directors are controlled by the PCGG including the 20% vote held by Cojuangco through his henchman Estelito Mendoza. In the elections held by the SMC Board of Directors last July 6, 1998, all of the PCGG representatives voted for Cojuangco.

San Miguel Cannot Quench Cojuangco's Thirst

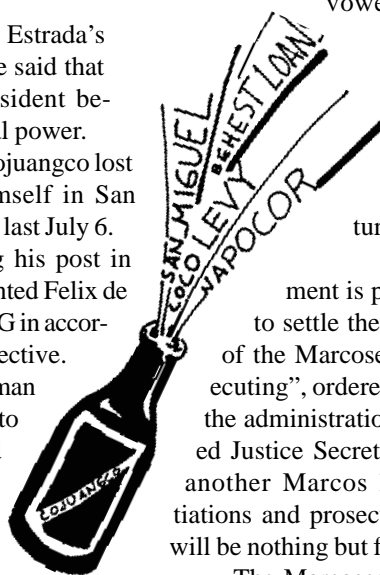
SMC is only the first of a long list of corporations and properties set to be repossessed by Cojuangco, the Marcoses and their stooges. Last July 24, Estrada appointed Douglas Luym, Carmelo Santiago and Jesus Pineda+, all Cojuangco lapdogs, to the NAPOCOR Board of Directors. Others appointed to the board are known minions of Geronimo Velasco, former Minister of Energy under Marcos.

Also in the works is Cojuangco's resumption of control and ownership over 250 corporations and shares sequestered by the PCGG since 1986 such as the P100-billion coco levy fund.

Cojuangco's repossession of these properties has become certain after Zamora announced that PCGG operations will be terminated within a year. He has vowed to pursue "amicable settlements" with the Marcoses. Talk is rife within the PCGG that the "tables have been turned".

The Estrada government is presently negotiating to settle the stolen wealth cases of the Marcoses. "Continue prosecuting", ordered Estrada. But under the administration of newly appointed Justice Secretary Serafin Cuevas, another Marcos loyalist, the negotiations and prosecution of these cases will be nothing but farce.

The Marcoses are sure of regaining their stolen wealth. This the law shall uphold. **AB**





Real Criminals Unmasked: Corruption and Crime in the AFP and PNP

The anti-crime and anti-graft stance of the Estrada regime is nothing but a big lie.

Under a semicolonial and semifeudal system, the Filipino masses are criminally exploited and oppressed by the joint dictatorship of the big comprador bourgeoisie and landlord class under US imperialist direction. The worst criminals are those in power who uphold this anti-national and anti-people system. At the forefront are their armed defenders, the AFP and the PNP and their superiors.

This rotten system breeds and coddles notorious criminal syndicates, “uniformed scalawags,” and all corrupt politician-thieves and bureaucrats. From the lowest to the highest rungs of the military and civilian bureaucracy, anomalies and conspiracies between criminals persecuted by law and the supposed champions of the law, are commonplace.

It is no secret that Estrada and other politicians have close connections with known “lords” of criminal syndicates. According to the Presidential Task Force on Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence itself, 2,423 police and military forces are members of syndicates; 1,842 of them are in active service. They form the backbone of 507 syndicates with 6,020 members operating nationwide.

The heated dispute between the generals and Secretary of Defense Orlando Mercado only indicates that anomalies within the military bureaucracy can no longer be concealed from the public. The generals’ plunder of billions of pesos intended for benefits of ordinary soldiers (like the Retirement and Separation Benefits System) has been exposed.

Squabble for Posts in the Bureaucracy

When he assumed power in Malacañang, Estrada immediately strengthened and consolidated his control over the armed forces and the police bureaucracy.

Estrada primarily relies on the faction of the late fascist dictator Marcos, some elements of the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa and a few other Ramos men within the AFP. To fortify his control over the AFP, Estrada appointed Mercado to the Department of National Defense. They are in cahoots with new AFP chief Lt. Gen. Joselin Nazareno. Nazareno was chosen in spite of his lackluster administrative record, to reward him for protecting Estrada’s votes in Mindanao.

To ensure control over the police, Estrada appointed himself Secretary of Interior and Local Government, the agency administering the PNP. Like a small town mayor, he is shaking down and reshuffling the PNP to position his own men and demonstrate to the police and criminals who the new boss is.

He has appointed Gen. Roberto Lastimoso as new PNP chief despite the latter’s lack of “seniority”—thereby infuriating high-ranking police officials. His staunchest henchmen, who all belong to the Philippine Military Academy Class of ’71 and who became his “boys” in the Philippine Anti-Crime Commission, have been appointed to the PNP’s strategic commands. They have long-held records as human rights violators. During the early years of martial law, they were junior lieutenants of the Philippine Constabulary under Col. Rolando Abadilla’s despised Metropolitan Intelligence and Security Group (MISG). The MISG was responsible for the arrest, torture and murder of hundreds of activists, progressive forces and other opponents of the Marcos dictatorship.

Estrada has warned PNP and AFP forces who refuse to tow the line, threatening that corrupt police and military “will not be given a second chance.” But he has also tried to woo them by promising additional wages, allowances and housing projects. A large budget deficit, however, soon forced him to retreat from granting wage increases; instead, he has pledged to raise the soldiers’ “take-home pay” by reducing their tax deductions.

Repressive Policies Behind the Anti-Crime Program

The Estrada regime is demagogically using the people’s widespread anger at the prevalence of crimes and anomalies in society to put his repressive programs in place.

He has established the Presidential Commission Against Organized Crime (PCAOC) to divert critics and protesters from focusing on his death squad: the powerful Task Force Against Organized Crime (TFAOC). He has given civilian anti-crime groups seats in the Commission in an attempt to boost the name of Gen. Panfilo Lacson and his other minions in the former PACC.

Under Estrada’s leadership, the TFAOC is authorized to disregard even bourgeois-reactionary legal and judicial processes. Within the TFAOC lurk more people who have

lengthy records of committing atrocities and abuses. Estrada will surely use them to eliminate small-time rivals of his ally, syndicate boss Atong Ang and of other crime "lords" composed of PNP and AFP officials.

The people should vigilantly guard against the Task Force and its extraordinary powers to surveil and suppress even the progressive movement, opponents of anti-national and anti-people policies and Estrada's reactionary political rivals.

The possibility is not remote for Estrada to mimic anti-drug operations in Latin America used by the US government to intervene directly in military and police matters and participate in campaigns to crush the revolutionary forces. In the Philippines, there have been instances (in the '90s) when US Drug Enforcement Agency personnel joined AFP troops in alleged anti-marijuana operations in the Cordillera.

Protest

Estrada's hurry to control the AFP and PNP can only provoke further rifts, especially since this would infringe on the interests of reactionary anti-Estrada groups and rival criminal syndicates.

The police and military are rotten to the core. They maintain "peace and order" only for the benefit of the ruling classes and their criminal cohorts.

In the face of the worsening economic and political crisis and rising criminality, the people's apprehension is rapidly giving way to the condemnation of the state which has not only proven itself inutile in persecuting and punishing criminals but is also in cahoots with big syndicates.

Each and every exploitative, oppressive and criminal scheme cooked up by the regime will surely be confronted by the people's intensifying struggles. **AB**

Visiting Forces Agreement:

Turning the Philippines into a virtual military base

Joseph Estrada is in a mad scramble to prove himself a rabid puppet of US imperialism. He is leaving no stone unturned to secure the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), the latest military treaty between the US and Philippine governments which flagrantly assaults the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

US Ambassador Thomas Hubbard and Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Domingo Siazon signed the VFA on February 10, 1998 before the close of Gen. Fidel Ramos' administration. Though already signed, the Philippine Senate has to ratify the VFA for the treaty to take effect in the country. The puppet Ramos regime attempted to have it approved immediately by the Senate but retreated in the face of intense criticism from various sectors of society.

The US is waging an all-out campaign to prevent a repeat of the VFA's rejection. Senators and other officials of the Estrada administration have been summoned to the US Embassy to obtain their support for the treaty. One after the other, ranking US state and defense officials such as State Secretary Madeleine Albright, US Pacific Command Adm. Joseph Pruehr and Defense Secretary William Cohen have visited the Philippines. The US has promised military aid for the AFP's "modernization" if the treaty is approved. Accordingly, the puppet Estrada regime has repeatedly given its assurance that the VFA will be approved, with the Senate's ratification a mere formality.

A More Pernicious Treaty

The VFA legalizes anew the US military forces' unbridled use of Philippine territory after the Senate rejected, in 1991, the Treaty of Friendship, Security and Cooperation which attempted to maintain the presence of US military bases.

It dovetails the ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement), which has been secretly adopted and put into effect by the US and Philippine governments since 1992. The ACSA allows US military ships and aircraft to have access to Philippine seaports and airports.

The VFA is far more pernicious than the rejected military bases treaty.

It allows US military troops, ships, aircraft and other equipment to enter or leave at will from any part of the country without inspection by Philippine government authorities and exempts them from paying taxes or tariffs. In effect, any part of the Philippines may be utilized as a US war base.

US military officials enjoy the exclusive right to inspect their own ships and planes. The Philippine government does not have the right to determine the presence of nuclear weapons on these vessels, thus negating the reactionary state's own constitutional provision prohibiting the presence of nuclear arms (temporarily or otherwise) inside Philippine territory.

US troops in the Philippines will also be granted extraterritorial powers. The Philippine government would have no real jurisdiction over US troops

who may commit crimes in the country. A mere certification from a US military official that a soldier committed a crime “while on duty” exempts the guilty party from any liability under Philippine laws. The US may even request that the accused be tried in their own civilian or military courts.

A related issue is the toxic waste left behind by US troops in Clark and Subic, which includes nuclear waste. This matter, which to date has not been resolved, has not been given any attention by the proposed treaty. The agreement does not hold the US government liable nor does it oblige it to pay reparations for any damage or injury suffered by civilians in the course of military operations and other activities covered by the treaty.

With the VFA’s effectivity having no time limit, the US can enforce its ominous provisions over an indefinite period.

Policy of Intervention

The VFA and ACSA serve US imperialism’s forward deployment strategy in Asia and its global strategy of rapid deployment.

These strategies ensure the rapid deployment and intervention of US troops whenever the US wages a war of aggression against its perceived enemies. Forward deployment and the maintenance of military bases are used in combination with VFAs and ACSAs in regions where there are “active threats” against the US’ strategic interests. They ensure the mobility of large numbers of US troops minus the financial and political costs of maintaining military bases.

At present, the US has six security agreements with various countries in the Asia-Pacific: the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines (August 30, 1951); and security treaties with Japan (September 8, 1951), South Korea (October 1, 1953), Australia (September 1, 1951) and the Marshall islands, Micronesia and Palau (November 4, 1986). It maintains military bases in South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. And it has signed VFAs and ACSAs with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Brunei, South Korea and Japan.

There are some 100,000 US troops permanently stationed in South Korea and Japan supported by forces and weapons from the entire US Pacific Command. These forces are primarily trained against North Korea, China and other countries considered as actual or potential enemies of the US or its Asian allies.

The US has a long record of using the Asia-Pacific as a staging area for war—from its engagement with co-

imperialist Japan during the Second World War to its war of aggression against Korea in the ‘50s and Vietnam in the ‘60s and ‘70s.

It also keeps close watch over the Indochinese peninsula where US imperialism has so far failed to suppress the struggle of the people of Kampuchea and other countries; countries like India and Pakistan which have lately been building their nuclear capability; and other perceived sources of regional tension such as the unresolved territorial dispute over the Spratly Islands.

Another objective is to keep open sea routes through which oil and other products from the Middle East are transported. A continuous supply of oil is of utmost importance to the economy of Japan, a close US ally. Japan also contributes billions of dollars to support US troops and other military requirements of the US in the region.

US troops in the Asia-Pacific are used to intervene in and attack areas as far as the Middle East. When the US launched Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield against Iraq in 1990 and early this year, the US used its military bases in the Asia-Pacific to rapidly deploy war troops to the Middle

East. Through existing ACSAs and VFAs with different countries in the region, the US was able to use seaports, airports and other facilities as transit points for its troops, ships and aircraft en route to the Middle East.

Securing US imperialism’s economic interests in the region lies at the core of maintaining US military presence in the Asia-Pacific. It is important for the US to maintain “stability” in the Asia-Pacific because the latter is an important destination for US surplus products and excess capital. Since the ‘90s, the region has served as a market for up to one-third of all US merchandise exports. On a per capita basis, Asians have been importing more goods from the US compared to Europeans. Thus, any threat to the “stability” of the Asia-Pacific is a threat to the economic and political stability of the US.

Intervention in the Philippines

The US has always maintained military troops in the Philippines for purposes of intervention, to prop up its puppet regime in the country and violently suppress the revolutionary movement. US military forces ensure that the reactionary government and its military and police forces receive ample anti-Communist indoctrination and strategic, logistical, intelligence and moral support, aside from additional military troops to launch counterrevolutionary war against the Filipino people.

The US has been crowing that waging joint military



Fascism and Counterrevolutionary Violence of the Neocolonial State

While people's protests and resistance grow in scope and strength, the reactionary ruling classes intensify their use of pretense and deception, fascist intimidation and suppression.

The neocolonial state is in deep crisis, convulsed by widespread revolutionary resistance. Fascist violence is its primary means of defending and perpetuating the exploitation of workers and peasants. This is the Estrada government's priority.

In the countryside, open terror reigns and recognized international humanitarian laws are flagrantly violated. In the cities, behind the facade of democratic processes, the human rights of workers, the urban poor and other sectors are widely suppressed.

Military Rule in the Countryside

Hundreds of thousands of peasant families endure hardships, are subjected to violence and forcibly evacuated by the military from lands claimed by foreign and local mining and logging corporations. In the mountains of Mindanao, Northern Luzon and other regions, there are continued bombings and strafing, widespread arrests and detention and hamletting of whole communities perpetrated by the AFP.

In South Cotabato, 240,000 B'laans and countless Manobos were forced out of their land grabbed by the Western Mining Corporation, an Australian company. Since 1996, the 37th and 20th IB of the Philippine Army have been attempting to forcibly evacuate the tribes. In 1997, the army units were replaced by the 28th IB and the CAFGU. The latter conducted extensive and successive military campaigns, including ruthless bombings intended to banish the minorities.

Five sitios in Brgy. Mayon, Compostela, Davao, were bombed by

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exercises of US and Philippine troops is one "advantage" the Philippines would gain from the VFA. The AFP would supposedly have the opportunity to train in the use of modern weapons and other US military equipment.

The US wants the Senate to ratify the VFA the soonest so it could push through with the "Balikatan" (a large-scale joint military exercise involving land, sea and air forces) this year. The exercise is usually held in the last quarter. So long as the VFA is not approved, the US can only hold small military exercises such as the naval exercise it launched this August near Bataan.

The object of such trainings is no other than the enhancement of the fascist AFP's capability to suppress the people and the revolutionary movement. Military exercises also prepare public opinion for outright armed intervention or actual use by the US of the country's territory to attack the Philippines' neighboring countries.

The US is pushing the VFA in the face of an unprecedented crisis of the world capitalist system and the local ruling system. In an effort to ride the crisis, the US has been enforcing the policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization. These policies, however, have wrought nothing but the untold poverty now afflicting the toiling masses.

Protests and the people's armed resistance are once more on the upsurge because of such intense exploitation and oppression.

The reinvigoration of the Party and the revolutionary movement in the Philippines which are reflected in the successful tactical offensives of the New People's Army and the advance of the legal democratic movement in the cities has been causing greater anxiety to US imperialism. It is now compelling the Estrada regime to enter into such brazenly anti-people and anti-national agreements such as the ACSA and VFA even at the risk of triggering the regime's further political isolation from the people.

The Estrada regime and its imperialist master are mistaken if they believe they could easily secure the Senate's approval of the VFA. Even now, they face fierce and widespread people's resistance to the treaty. Aside from the militant and progressive movement, among those opposed to the VFA are conservative but influential groups such as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the Philippine Muslim Task Force Against US Aggression and various civic organizations.

There is a solid basis for establishing a broad united front against the US' schemes of interference, intervention and aggression. **AB**

the 60th IB last July 12. More than a thousand people were forced to evacuate. From 1992 to 1998, villages in Mahagsay, San Luis, Agusan del Sur were bombed before the harvest season.

In Brgy. Quipot, San Juan, Batangas, brothers Crisostomo and Francisco Baes were abducted, imprisoned and tortured by PNP troops last June 19. The two are members of the militant Samahang Magbubukid sa Batangas which is protesting widespread land-use conversion in the province.

In barrios where it suspects the presence of revolutionary forces, the AFP openly terrorizes the people through arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, bombings and killings.

Last December 25, 1997, the 73rd and 29th IB bombed and assaulted four barrios in Paquibato District, Davao City. The military retaliated by victimizing innocent civilians after the NPA successfully disarmed 18 CAFGUs in a nearby area.

Last March 19, 1997, the 68th IB bombed Brgy. Lucapon, Sta. Cruz, Zambales on suspicion that there were NPA guerrillas in the area. The entire barrio was zoned, houses ransacked and suspected NPA supporters arrested.

Suppression and Repression in the Cities

Strikes are commonly attacked by the police and military. From 1995 to 1997, 71 cases of picketline dispersals resulting in the death of eight strikers were recorded. From 1996 to 1997, more than 10,000 cases of human rights violations against workers were also reported.

Laws and mechanisms which restrict the right to strike and bind unions to unending legal processes are extensively employed. An outstanding example is the Herrera Law's (RA 6715) provision on assumption of jurisdiction.

This June, Philippine Air Lines (PAL) employees went on strike to assert the right to job security of 5,000 workers laid off by the company. Estrada invoked the repressive Herrera Law to break the strike and compel the workers to sign an agreement favorable to PAL owner Lucio Tan. Since 1989, strikes over which the DOLE (Department of Labor and Employment) assumed jurisdiction increased by 125%.

In the country's 19 export processing zones, unions and strikes are banned outright.

The urban poor are forcibly evacuated from land claimed by real estate speculators and big businessmen. Within the few months before the APEC Summit was held in November 1996, some 50,000 families lost their homes and livelihood due to the government's violent demolition operations.

Even other sections of the urban petty-bourgeoisie fall prey to state violence. Human rights advocates and pro-people activists are persecuted, at times resulting in the "salvaging" of identified protesters. No one is spared by the reactionary armed forces. In one instance, the family of the late Rolando Olalia, their lawyers and supporters were harassed and intimidated after they revived the murder case against former and active AFP officials who abducted, tortured and killed Olalia and Leonor Alay-ay in 1986.

Violating Humanitarian Laws of War

The ruthlessness and atrocity of AFP forces against captured members of the revolutionary movement go on unabated. Many of those arrested especially in armed encounters are summarily executed or tortured and forced to become intelligence assets or counterrevolutionary psywar agents of the AFP-PNP. Women fighters are often abused and raped before being killed.

In Dikapanikian, Dingalan, Aurora, four young members of an NPA auxiliary unit, including two women, were massacred by 56th and 70th IB elements led by Lt. Raymundo Aguada last July 9. The women were raped and murdered, their genital areas riddled with bullets to conceal the savagery they had been subjected to.

At Villa Gracia, Maddela, Quirino, troops under Lieutenant Diaz ("Bravo" Company), and Lieutenant Gendraule ("Charlie" Company) of



the 77th IB, killed Ka Egan (Sofronio Ybañez) after capturing him unwounded in an encirclement operation last January 24.

At Sto. Domingo, Jones, Isabela last January 30, troops under Lieutenant Castro ("Bravo" Company) of the 21st IB, seized Ka Deo (Ernesto dela Peña) after a 30-minute gunfight. Instead of applying first aid to Ka Deo who was only slightly wounded, he was left to bleed to death; he died five hours later.

The PNP and AFP incessantly violate the agreements with the NDF signed by the GRP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines). The capture, detention and torture of Sotero Llamas and Danilo Borjal, both consultants of the NDF negotiating panel, are clear violations of the JASIG (Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantee). Last January 29, Antonio Jamora, member of Danilo Borjal's staff, was also arrested and threatened by members of the AFP.

To deceive and trap the NPA into declaring an indefinite ceasefire, the AFP often announces bogus SOMOs (suspension of offensive military operations), which it brazenly violates anyway. Last March 28, in the middle of the regime's own SOMO (Dec. 1997 – June 1998), elements of the 58th IB encircled an NPA squad in Buenavista, Agusan del Norte. Three Red fighters were killed and two were taken prisoner. Remelo Basilan and Ruel Distresa were detained and hidden from their families and friends.

In Marilog District, Davao City, troopers from the 73rd IB encircled an NPA unit last May 2, killing nine Red fighters, a farmer and his 12-year-old child. To cover up their violation of their own SOMO, the soldiers accused the guerrillas of being cattle rustlers.

Despite Estrada's having signed the Comprehensive Agreement for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law between the NDFP and the GRP, political prisoners charged with criminal cases remain imprisoned. In one case, Ka Benzar (Amado Payot), an NPA commander apprehended last March in South Cotabato, was tortured and imprisoned with criminal charges filed against him. Records show that no less than 134 political prisoners are illegally detained in different parts of the country.

Continuing and Intensifying Fascism

Despite the fall of the US-Marcos fascist dictatorship in 1986, the consecutive Aquino, Ramos and Estrada regimes perpetuated the fascist machinery of the AFP-PNP. US imperialism maintains its tight grip over the AFP-PNP, the largest and most notorious defender of imperialist rule in the country. The

attempts of the puppet Estrada regime to repatriate Ver and his sons is only the latest among its schemes to clear the names of even the worst fascist scalawags of the AFP-PNP.

Counterrevolutionary violence and fascism lurk behind the thin veil of "Filipino-style democracy" bandied about by former president Ramos and his fellow reactionaries.

Extensive and intensifying fascism are basic characteristics of a crisis-ridden semicolonial and semifeudal system. Even the first two years of the Aquino puppet regime (a time when the anti-fascist uprising that catapulted it to power still enjoyed some momentum) were marked by the unprecedented growth of AFP forces, the widespread buildup of the CAFGU and vigilante groups, large-scale military campaigns within and around urban centers, and the brazen murder of nationalist leaders and activists such as Lando Olalia, Leonor Alay-ay and Lean Alejandro.

From the time of the Ramos puppet regime, there have been unmistakable signs of growing fascism and preparations for more systematic fascist surveillance and control of the people, such as Gen. Jose Almonte's proposal for a national identification system. In the name of the anti-crime campaign, these fascist decrees are being upheld by the Estrada regime.

Despite the serious monetary and economic crisis and large cuts in the budgetary allotments for social services, the Estrada government will provide P30.2 billion to finance the recruitment of more AFP personnel and the acquisition of military equipment. It is gearing for bigger battles against the struggling masses and the revolutionary movement.

This year alone, the Estrada regime is planning to recruit 3,500 additional AFP soldiers. This contradicts Secretary of Defense Orlando Mercado's claim that the regime is now capable of defeating, militarily, the NPA and Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces, which Malacañang and the AFP refer to as the "primary threats to internal security."

Due to lack of funds, the 15-year P331 billion AFP modernization program has been temporarily set aside. The purchase of modern warplanes and war vessels has been deferred in favor of concentrating the strength and resources of the reactionary army on campaigns to "clear, hold and consolidate" areas affected by the two "internal threats." The Estrada regime is now desperately seeking from the US additional arms and training support for the AFP. Intensifying state fascism will, without doubt, be met head-on by the people's vigorous struggles. **AB**



Rebuilding and Advancing Anew

Proletarian revolutionaries in Metro Manila have completed the process of regrouping and rebuilding the Party organization. Before this, the Party organ in the region was on the verge of collapse. The Party and the revolutionary forces are assiduously reinvigorating themselves on the more solid basis of the Second Great Rectification Movement and the conscious repudiation of revisionism, insurrectionism and opportunism especially of the Trotskyite Lagman clique.

To thwart the unbridled attacks of counterrevolutionary enemies within and outside its ranks, the Party regrouped the relatively few but loyal proletarian revolutionaries and mass activists. The regional Party organization has improved its ideological, political and organizational capabilities in the course of struggling against the revisionism and opportunism of the Lagman clique and consciously upholding Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) and the general line of people's democratic revolution.

Alongside its internal consolidation, the Party actively leads and advances the revolutionary struggles of the people, especially the masses of workers and other urban poor. In the past few years, the recruitment and training of new forces to replace those who have been corrupted, have reneged or dropped out have been proceeding at a faster pace.

Among the measurable fruits of the reinvigoration of the revolutionary mass movement in the region are the more than 35,000 workers who joined

the rally commemorating International Workers' Day in 1997 and the thousands mobilized for the March-Rally Against Poverty (Lakbayan) held in October that year. The masses also enthusiastically responded to strike calls against oil price hikes as well as other mass protests. The mass movement in factories, communities and schools is vigorously expanding. The regional Party organization's mass work directly encompasses hundreds of enterprises. Majority of the unions in these establishments are effectively led or influenced. From April to November 1997, the number of worker activists in factories increased by 31%. More than 100 urban poor communities with tens of thousands of residents are covered by the regional urban poor movement. For six months in 1997, membership in mass organizations rose by 11% in these communities. The urban poor enthusiastically join protests and mass struggles. More and more factory workers are being drawn out to participate in street demonstrations.

The student movement in the region covers scores of schools with student population in the tens of thousands, a few thousand employees and hundreds of teachers. Due to militant struggles, a number of schools now have student councils. Student activists lead, influence and maintain links with academic and traditional organizations encompassing almost 10,000 students. The number of student activists in the region has virtually increased three-fold from April to November 1997.

Cultural work is developing and advancing in communities and schools. Cultural presentations are

consciously integrated into all gatherings and mass actions. One outstanding example was the participation of close to 90 dramatic artists, singers, dancers, painters and other cultural workers in the Lakbayan.

Revolutionary Mass Movement and Struggle in Metro Manila

From the beginning, the Party has had the highest regard for the revolutionary movement and struggle in the capital region, believing this to be an essential requisite in the solid and all-sided advance of the people's democratic revolution. This, the Party firmly understands, for it is in Metro Manila where the movement regrouped and reinvigorated itself from the ashes of the old merger Party and people's army which were liquidated by the Lavaites' revisionism.

Proletarian revolutionary cadres took the lead in laying the foundations of the revolutionary urban mass movement in the '60s. This was in direct preparation for the reestablishment of the Communist Party of the Philippines under the guidance of MLM in 1968 and the formation of the NPA the following year. The advance of the revolutionary urban mass movement enabled the Party to deploy immediately cadres from Metro Manila and other cities and town centers to assist in the establishment of guerrilla zones and fronts in the countryside.

The advance of the democratic mass movement in the region was the

product of painstaking organizing work among the ranks of youth and students, workers and professionals. It was also the result of propagating the line of people's democratic revolution through study circles, publications and progressive writings. Militant mass actions were likewise waged to advance the people's democratic interests and welfare and expose and oppose US imperialism and its local puppets.

From these efforts exerted in the '60s, the reinvigorated revolutionary mass movement in the region reached its height during the years of upsurge from 1970-72. A most notable development was the First Quarter Storm of 1970. Alongside, the foundations of the revolutionary urban mass movement were established nationwide.

The reestablished Party never abandoned revolutionary work and struggle in urban areas even during the darkest years of the fascist US-Marcos dictatorship. The democratic revolutionary mass movement in the region resisted and overcame the initial shock inflicted by fascist terror. The Party was able to expand its membership from 800 before the imposition of martial law to more than 1,000 by the middle of the '70s, despite arrests and the dictatorship's attempts to cripple and crush the revolutionary urban mass movement. It continued contributing to the nationwide effort to establish guerrilla fronts in the countryside.

Revisionist Distortions

The revisionist distortion of the line of urban struggle in the Philippines lies at the core of such serious deviations and insurrectionist, putschist,

adventurist and opportunist errors which wrought severe damage to the Party and movement in the region since the second half of the '70s. To push its line of urban insurrectionism, the Trotskyite Lagman clique propagated the erroneous view of a capitalist or backward capitalist Philippine society. According to such analysis, the working class ought to be the revolution's leading force and insurrection, the correct revolutionary strategy, instead of protracted people's war. The clique propagated the fantastic notion that conditions in 1989-90 were ripe for urban insurrection. It claimed that the revolutionary forces were on the verge of advancing towards strategic and decisive engagements in urban areas.

On the other hand, the clique also advocated adventurist and putschist tactics to incite the outbreak of insurrection. This it did by employing agents provocateur, militarist and populist methods. These methods rely mainly on the spontaneous consciousness and actions of the masses and factional differences among reactionaries.

They propagated the small group mentality, ultrademocracy and finally, factionalism and a brazenly anti-Party line.

All this led to unprecedented damage, loss of initiative and passivity on the part of the Party and movement in the region.

Such deviations from the orientation of the urban mass movement can only lead to the complete isolation of urban struggles from the overall revolutionary struggle. Once isolated from people's war, the revolutionary movement in the cities will be unable sustain itself or undertake any endeavor over a prolonged period. On the other hand, neither can the people's war attain victory without the advance of the

urban mass movement and the latter's thorough and continued support.

The path of rectification lies only in steadily and determinedly advancing the legal democratic urban mass movement and patiently accumulating solid revolutionary strength while firmly supporting the movement and war in the countryside.

Continued and All-Sided Advance

When the revisionist renegades led by the madman Filemon 'Popoy' Lagman bolted, the Party organization in Metro Manila was slowly able to recover and strengthen itself by persevering in the task of ideological building and conducting painstaking mass work.

From the severe dislocations suffered in 1992, district committees as well as other levels of the Party organization in the region have not only been rebuilt, but have been assiduously strengthened.

On the other hand, forces carried away and deceived by the Lagman clique have been fast disintegrating. After organizing a few noisy but empty spectacles for the mass media, the Trotskyite clique has lost steam. They unashamedly grovelled before and compromised with the reactionary ruling classes. They endorsed the anti-national and anti-people Philippines 2000 program of the reactionary puppet Ramos regime. Thus has the Lagman clique been swiftly exposed and isolated from the broad masses.

It has further been weakened and its logistics diminished when the Sergio Romero-led Alex Boncayao Brigade split from Lagman due to personal and factional differences.

Now conscious of the clique's true character, unions and other forces deceived and carried away by Lagman are once more gravitating towards the revolutionary movement.



The Party and revolutionary mass movement in Metro Manila are now in an excellent position to further advance and lead the legal democratic mass movement amid the intensifying crisis of the ruling system. The people's anger is seething at their rapidly worsening enslavement and oppression. Objective conditions are extremely favorable for daringly advancing and bolstering the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-fascist movement and struggles.

Protests and mass struggles are enthusiastically advancing. There is need to sustain and further strengthen this momentum to defend and advance the interests of the exploited and oppressed people. It is the duty of the Party regional organization in Metro Manila to exert all efforts to lead, support and popularize mass resistance. These should be strengthened and linked with the people's broad economic and political struggles which vigorously denounce and inflict heavy blows against neocolonial, feudal and fascist rule.

The Party and revolutionary mass movement in the Metro Manila region have made notable progress since the Second Great Rectification Movement was launched. Nonetheless, there remain deep-seated and widespread errors which have to be criticized and repudiated for rectification to be thorough and continuous. It is natural for counterrevolutionary influences and ideas to be widespread in urban centers. There is need to be vigilant to and resist them.

Guided by basic principles and determined to rectify errors, the Party and revolutionary forces in Metro Manila have sharpened their vigilance to any emergence of errors and deviations. They will surely reap greater victories in the future. **AB**

Regarding the national minimum wage

In its last issue, Ang Bayan tackled the heightened exploitation and oppression of the Filipino masses brought about by the anti-national and anti-people policies of imperialist "globalization." This article focuses attention on minimum wages. These clarifications are being made to support the Filipino workers' struggle for a substantial P100 additional wage. In particular, we want to show that the demand for an additional wage is in line with the stand for a national minimum wage standard.

The Wage Regionalization Act or Republic Act 6727 was enacted in 1990. This law eliminated the old national standards and the practice of setting a national minimum workers' wage. Instead, a Regional Wage Board (RWB) now determines the minimum wage according to a region's situation and other considerations.

The workers' experience has proven that wage regionalization is a divisive instrument which pegs and even further reduces, severely low wages. The Regional Wage Board is composed of capitalists, bureaucrats and yellow "union leaders" who compete to further pauperize workers.

The regionalized wage system takes advantage of the poor and backward conditions of workers and the large unemployed and underemployed force in the countryside by barring any wage increase and pushing wages even lower than the subsistence level. Any demand for additional wages is arbitrarily denied or a very minimal addition is arbitrarily determined.

It also exploits and aggravates the disorganized state of workers so as to further localize and diffuse any workers' action.

Since RA 6727 was implemented, Filipino workers' wages have been depressed to much lower levels. From 1991 to 1997, the minimum wage in Metro Manila increased by only P79 despite the need for a P471.14 addition to the current minimum to restore it to its 1990 level. The wage condition of workers outside Metro Manila is even worse.

In essence, wage regionalization means not only the localization of wages but the dismantling of the workers' right to a minimum wage. It eliminates the national standard for the lowest acceptable wage. Thus, the reactionary government also outrightly abandons its responsibility to uphold the people's right to decent, life-sustaining wages. On the other hand, this bolsters the power of capital to maximize profit from labor power.

The right to a minimum wage, like the right to an eight-hour workday, are labor standards achieved in the course of the life-and-death struggle of workers all over the world. These standards shield workers from inhuman working conditions and further immiseration.

The struggle for a higher minimum wage has always been part of the Filipino workers' movement, since its emergence in the early years of the current century. It has also always been a major issue advanced by the militant unions'

movement, the newly established Communist Party as well as the unions under its leadership in the 1930s. After the Second World War, the Congress of Labor Organizations continued to advocate this right.

A legislated minimum wage is a concession to the workers—but one that will not take effect without some payback.

Amid the serious crisis and the rise of the militant workers' and peasant movement of the '30s, Manuel Quezon implemented in 1936 the minimum one-peso daily wage. This was in line with his "Social Justice" program. But this was nonetheless used to deceive and derail workers from being drawn in their numbers to the Communist Party and the revolutionary struggle.

In 1973, the fascist dictator Marcos devised the Labor Code only after having violently suppressed the militant workers' movement since martial law was imposed in 1972. Alongside, Marcos established the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines as the center of yellow unionism and reformism among workers.

The minimum wage law and other reforms in industrial relations are widely violated. Worse, they are used by yellow, reformist and pro-imperialist "union leaders" to draw workers away from the path of militant unionism and political struggles for revolutionary social change.

Since the '60s, experience has proven that only through the militant working class movement's persistent demands can the minimum wage be raised and the rights of workers advanced. In the first half of the '80s, a substantial increase in the real value of wages was legislated despite a severe economic crisis. It was at this time that the strongest and longest-sustained strike movement in the nation's history was attained, along with anti-fascist struggles led by workers.

Nevertheless, imperialists and bourgeois compradors took advantage of the grave disorientation and errors within the revolutionary movement and militant workers' union. Their goal was to divide and dissipate the workers' ranks. They encouraged and aided in various ways the revisionist and yellow splittists, especially the Trotskyite Lagman grouplet, to sabotage and sow confusion and demoralization.

There are several schemes being enforced by the reactionary government to intensify the exploitation of workers. These include the prevalent

fascist attacks against union rights, the "flexible labor" policy, the Herrera Law and the Wage Regionalization Act. All working standards are being revoked and reversed; anything that would bar big foreign and local capital from massively expropriating Filipino labor-power and profiting immensely from it are being eliminated.

The demand by militant unions for a P100 addition to the minimum wage is correct and just. It is important to demand a substantive wage increase in the face of ever skyrocketing prices of workers' basic needs. This struggle, moreover, should unify Filipino workers in collective and militant struggles for their fundamental democratic and economic rights.

Indeed, the struggle for additional wages should encompass the struggle to reject wage regionalization and to institutionalize a national standard for a decent and life-sustaining minimum wage. This should also be closely linked to the struggle against the neocolonial policies of deregulation, liberalization and denationalization.

In advancing the interest of the working class, forging the broadest and strongest militant and revolutionary unity of the working masses remains a key task, along with developing their firm solidarity with other democratic and progressive forces, especially the peasantry.

The struggle for reforms in the minimum wage should serve to raise the political consciousness, unity and struggle of the working class. This is the only way to advance workers' struggles to secure tactical gains and advance the strategic interests of their class and the entire nation. **AB**



NEWS

AMBUSH, RAID LAUNCHED IN SAMAR

Two successful tactical offensives were launched by the New People's Army (NPA) in Samar last July 28. The Red fighters ambushed a jeepload of soldiers from the 801st Bde of Philippine Army in Brgy. Urdaneta, Lavezares, Northern Samar. Lt. Gabriel Rosales and two other soldiers were killed in the ambush.

Meanwhile, 200 meters from the ambush site, another guerrilla team raided the 1st PNP Provincial Mobile Force headquarters. Two policemen were reportedly killed and others were wounded. There was no casualty among the Red fighters. Confiscated from the enemy were one M60, two M14s, five M16s, two .45 pistols, a .38 revolver and other military equipment.

Due to extreme embarrassment, the national police leadership relieved Gen. Tuacula Ulama, PNP regional Director for Eastern Visayas.

TACTICAL OFFENSIVES CONTINUE IN BICOL

Seven enemy troops were killed and three were wounded in successive NPA tactical offensives in Bicol from March to August. Twelve firearms of assorted caliber were confiscated by the Red fighters.

In Brgy. Caayunan, Basud, Camarines Norte, Juan dela Rosa, an AFP soldier, was killed in a sniping operation by the NPA last August 13.

On July 20, the NPA raided a 22nd IB PA detachment in Brgy. Rosario, Oas, Albay at approximately 11:00 a.m. Eight high caliber rifles and one M60 machine gun were seized by the

NPA. PFC Manuel Baldoza was killed in the two-hour gunfight.

According to *Silyab*, Bicol's mass newspaper, a CAGFU element was slain in a harassment operation initiated by a 14-man NPA unit against the 76th IB last March 12 in Pasacao, Camarines Sur.

Three other members of the PNP Regular Mobile Force Company of Tiwi, Albay were killed in an NPA ambush in Sitio Cristo, Tiwi, Albay last April 1. One RSAF member surrendered and two other policemen were wounded. Two M16s and a revolver were confiscated.

These tactical offensives followed on the heels of two consecutive ambushes in Sorsogon last March. An AFP trooper was killed and a policeman was severely wounded.

ENEMY BLEEDS FROM NPA OFFENSIVES

New People's Army guerrillas caused the enemy to bleed in different tactical offensives in Luzon and Mindanao.

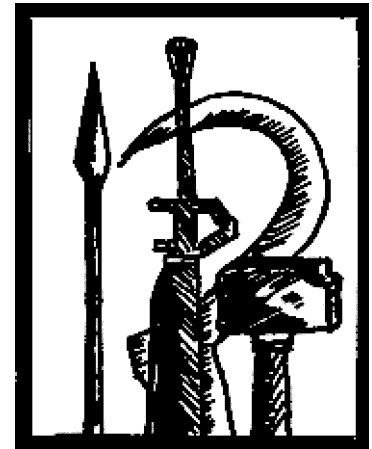
In Brgy. Calubcob I, San Juan, Batangas, a three-man NPA sparrow unit punished a member of a PNP Mobile Force Company last August 30. An M16 and a .45 were confiscated from SPO2 Santiago Bonilla.

Meanwhile, an AFP army lieutenant was killed when an NPA platoon ambushed troopers of the 54th IB PA in Sitio Bacalan, Brgy. Mainit, Mt. Province this August 24. The slain official was identified as 2Lt. Pericles Tirasol. Wounded in the ambush were Cpl. Enrique Bulong and Cpl. Arsenio Millano.

The police chief of Boston, Davao Oriental and three other PNP troops were also killed in an ambush last July. Five policemen were wounded. The troops were aboard a jeep when they

were ambushed by Red Fighters.

Last April 15, the NPA also punished a notorious rubber plantation administrator named "Bobby" in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. This elated the masses of Labako, Km. 6, Nato, Esperanza, who have long been victimized by the target.



ILOCOS-CORDILLERA HOLDS REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The Ilocos-Cordillera region successfully held its joint Party conference. The Executive Committee of the Party's Central Committee led the summing-up of revolutionary practice in the two erstwhile separate regions.

The conference focused on the Party's ideological, political and organizational consolidation; on the continuing progress of the rectification movement; and the critical problems hindering the overall progress of the region. The orientation of the region's main city was finalized. The delegates ratified a resolution defining the nature of the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) which unites all revolutionary forces in the region.

A three-year program was outlined by the newly elected leadership. The program reflects the direction of expansion and strengthening of the revolutionary movement in the region.

PEACE FORUM HELD IN MINDANAO

A Mindanao-wide Peace Forum led by comrades Luis Jalandoni and Coni Ledesma, members of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace panel, was successfully held from May 24 to July 4. The Peace Forum launched in Mindanao's main cities discussed the basic problems faced by the people of the island. In Butuan City, 600 participated in the consultations.

In related news, the Frank Navarro Command of the New People's Army (NPA) in Northern Mindanao freed PFC Rito Noguerra of the 38th IB last May 9 in San Luis, Agusan del Sur. Noguerra was one of two soldiers arrested by the NPA last April 20 in Mahagsay, San Luis, while conducting a "counter-insurgency" operation.

According to *Ang Kalihukan*, Northern Mindanao's revolutionary mass newspaper, Noguerra was formally turned over to the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the religious and officials of the local reactionary government. He was released pursuant to an order issued by the NDFP last May 1.

MASSACRE IN AURORA EXPOSED

It was a massacre, not an encounter: Thus concluded a fact-finding mission led by human rights groups which looked into the deaths of four youth in Brgy. Dikapanakian, Aurora last June 9.

The results of the investigation conducted by the Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights (Karapatan) belied claims made by Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado and AFP officials that the youth who belonged to a service unit of the NPA were killed in an encounter with troopers of the 56th and 70th IB.

Confirmed to have been brutally murdered were Cely Añonuevo, 14; Maritess Casamis, 16; Jimmy Baltazar, 18; and Ricardo Ilustre, 19. Wildredo Quibral was captured and temporarily released. Based on Quibral's testimony and other evidence gathered, Añonuevo and Casamis were raped before they

were killed. The two young men who were wounded and no longer capable of fighting were nonetheless killed on orders of Lt. Raymundo Aguada, the troopers' commanding officer.

Residents of Dingalan, Aurora strongly condemned the massacre and demanded the expulsion of the AFP units involved.

ESTRADA SIGNS HUMAN RIGHTS ACCORD

Pres. Joseph Estrada signed the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. Estrada approved the accord through a memorandum issued last August 7. The agreement had already been signed by members of the negotiating panels of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) last March 16 in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Comrade Mariano Orosa, NDFP chair and principal in the peace talks, signed the agreement last April 10.

In a statement issued last August 11, NDFP panel chair Comrade Luis Jalandoni hailed Estrada's approval of the agreement, challenging him to order its immediate implementation. The Estrada regime, said the NDFP, must take certain steps to prove to its seriousness to the Filipino people. These include the release of political prisoners; the indemnification of victims of human rights violations under the Marcos regime; the formation of a joint monitoring committee; the review and repeal of repressive laws, decrees and other executive orders and the review and revision of GRP policies, laws, programs, projects, campaigns and practices that cause or allow the forcible evacuation and re-concentration of civilians and the commission of other human rights violations.

